

Message Text

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12
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INFO AMCONSUL BOMBAY
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LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 1 OF 2 NEW DELHI 3845

EO 11652: NA
TAGS: PINT, IN
SUBJ: MRS GANDHI'S SOUTHERN TOUR

INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY: PRIME MINISTER GANDHI MADE A THREE-DAY SWING THROUGH KERALA AND TAMIL NADU SEPTEMBER 13-15. IN MAJOR SPEECHES AT TRIVANDRUM, NAGERCOIL, MADURAI, AND COIMBATORE, SHE REPEATED MANY OF HER FAVORITE THEMES. HER SHARP ATTACKS ON THE OPPOSITION PARTIES WERE REMINISCENT OF PAST ELECTION TOUR SPEECHES. SHE CLAIMED THAT DISRUPTIVE ELEMENTS WERE STILL AT WORK, DECLARED THAT SEPARATISM WILL NOT BE TOLERATED AT ANY COST, AND STRONGLY DEFENDED THE PROPOSED CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS. SHE ALSO HSARPLY CRITICIZED THE DMK FOR ITS ADVOCACY OF CASTE, LANGUAGE, AND SEPARATISM. THE PRIME MINISTER REFUSED, HOWEVER, TO BE DRAWN OUT ON THE QUESTION OF HOLDING ELECTIONS. ALTHOUGH THE PURPOSE OF MRS GANDHI'S TOUR WAS OSTENSIBLY TO OPEN A NW RAIL LINE IN KERALA AND TO VIEW THE DROUGHT-AFFECTED REGIONS OF TAMIL NADU, IT IS LIKELY THAT HER REAL INTENT WAS TO TEST THE POLITICAL WATER IN THE SOUTH AND TO PUMP SOME LIFE INTO THE CONGRESS ORGANIZATION IN THE TWO STATES

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WHERE SUPPORT FOR THE PARTY IS WEAKEST. END INTRODUC-

TION AND SUMMARY.

1. THROUGHOUT HER SPEECHES IN KERALA AND TAMIL NADU, MRS GANDHI REITERATED HER FAVORITE THEME THAT "DISRUPTIVE ELEMENTS" WERE STILL AT WORK IN THE COUNTRY. IF THERE WAS A "LITTLE SLACKENING," THESE ELEMENTS WOULD RAISE THEIR HEADS AGAIN AND SPREAD RUMORS AND FALSE PROPAGANDA. SHE CLAIMED THAT THOSE WHO HAD BEEN RELEASED FROM DETENTION WERE STILL SPEAKING THE SAME OLD LANGUAGE "AS IF NOTHING HAS CHANGED IN INDIA." SHE ALSO WARNED THAT THE ALL-INDIA AGITATION HAD NOT BEEN WITHDRAWN YET AND URGED CITIZENS TO BE VIGILANT.

2. MRS GANDHI DESCRIBED ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS THE GREAT PROGRESS THAT HAD BEEN ACHIEVED IN INDUSTRY, AGRICULTURE AND OTHER FIELDS SINCE THE PROCLAMATION OF THE EMERGENCY. SHE SAID THIS HAD BEEN POSSIBLE BECAUSE "THERE WAS A SENSE OF UNITY, BECAUSE THERE WAS A FEELING OF RESPONSIBILITY AND DISCIPLINE AMONG THE PEOPLE AND BECAUSE WE DID NOT ALLOW FISSIPARIOUS TENDENCIES OR USELESS AGITATIONS TO CONTINUE TO HARM THE COUNTRY." SHE DECRIED SEPARATISM IN ANY FORM, SAYING THAT SHE WOULD USE ALL THE POWERS AT HER COMMAND TO PUT DOWN SEPARATIST MOVEMENTS WHATEVER THE COST. THE PRIME MINISTER ALSO SAID: "ONLY IF THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT IS STRONG AND THE WHOLE NATION IS STRONG, ALL THE STATES CAN GO FORWARD. THE CENTRE WILL THEN BE IN A BETTER POSITION TO HELP THOSE WHO ARE SUFFERING OR THOSE WHO ARE BACKWARD OR WEAKER."

3. ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS DURING HER TOUR OF TAMIL NADU, MRS GANDHI DEVOTED HER REMARKS ALMOST ENTIRELY TO CONDEMNING THE DIVISIVE SLOGANEERING OF A CERTAIN POLITICAL PARTY (I.E., THE DMK). SHE CALLED ON THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE TO COMBAT THE "RIDICULOUS" SLOGANS OF THE DMK AND CONCENTRATE ON MAKING UP FOR THE TIME LOST DURING THE ERSTWHILE REGIME. SHE SHARPLY CRITICIZED THE PARTY'S PROPAGATION OF SLOGANS ON THE ISSUES OF CASTE, LANGUAGE, AUTONOMY AND SEPARATISM, SAYING: "WE HAVE NOT ONLY ASSURED THE PEOPLE BUT WE HAVE PROVED BY LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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OUR POLICY AND ACTION THAT WE DO NOT WANT TO FORCE ANY LANGUAGE ON ANY PEOPLE. BUT WE WANT ONLY TO ENCOURAGE BY ALL WAYS POSSIBLE THE REGIONAL LANGUAGES. HENCE, ANTI-HINDI SLOGANS ARE ENTIRELY WITHOUT SUBSTANCE." CONGEN MADRAS REPORTS THAT AT ONLY ONE POINT (DURING A SPEECH AT MADURAI) DID THE PRIME MINISTER SPECIFICALLY REFER TO THE DMK BY NAME. IN THE CONTEXT OF PRAISING THE PAST GOVERNMENTS OF TAMIL NADU, SHE SAID: "UNFOR-

TUNATELY, IN THE LAST FE YEARS THERE WAS ANOTHER
GOVERNMENT--THE DMK GOVERNMENT-- AND THE STANDARD OF
ADMINISTRATION FELL VERY MUCH. FOR THE FIRST TIME
TAMIL NADU LAGGED BEHIND."

4. WHILE MRS GANDHI MAY HAVE LIMITED HERSELF TO ONE
REFERENCE TO THE DMK BY NAME, MINISTER OF STATE FOR
HOME AFFAIRS OM MEHTA FELT NO SUCH INHIBITIONS. IN A
SPEECH AT MADURAI IMMEDIATELY PRECEDING HERS, MEHTA
CASTIGATED THE DMK FOR ITS MISRULE AND MISUSE OF POWER
AND EXPLAINED WHY IT HAD TO BE DISSOLVED. HE STATED
THAT NOT ONLY THE SARKARIA COMMISSION, BUT ALSO THE
CBI WAS INVOLVED IN BRINGING THE DMK'S MISDEEDS TO
LIGHT.

5. ON THE CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS, THE PRIME MINISTER
DECLARED THAT NOTHING WAS BEING DONE HASTILY AND THAT
THERE HAD BEEN A NATIONWIDE DEBATE ON THE PROPOSED
CHANGES. SHE SAID THAT VARIOUS RIGHTS, PRIVILEGES,
AND FREEDOMS HAD BEEN GUARANTEED TO THE PEOPLE UNDER
THE CONSTITUTION BUT "YOU AND I KNOW THAT THE VAST
MAJORITY OF OUR PEOPLE COULD NOT TAKE ADVANTAGE OF
THEIR RIGHTS UNDER THE CONSTITUTION BECAUSE OF THE
POWERFUL INTERESTS WHICH DID NOT WANT THEM TO DO SO."
THE DEMAND "THAT THE CONSTITUTION BE CHANGED, THAT
MAJOR STRUCTURAL CHANGES BE MADE IN THE ELECTORAL
SYSTEM AND ENTIRE SYSTEM" HAD NOT COME FROM THE CON-
GRESS BUT FROM THE OPPOSITION. YET, WHEN "MUCH Milder
CHANGES" WERE PROPOSED TO THE CONSTITUTION THERE WAS
A HUE AND CRY THAT "WE ARE BEING ANTI-DEMOCRATIC."
AS FOR THE INSTRUMENT TO EFFECT THESE CHANGES, MRS
GANDHI DECLARED: "THE VOICE OF THE PEOPLE CAN ONLY
BE HEARD THROUGH THE PARLIAMENT. ONLY PARLIAMENT
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COULD EFFECT THESE CHANGES. THEREFORE PARLIAMENT
IS SUPREME."

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